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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of urban schools in an advanced industrial society such as the United States, and the extent to which structural changes in the economy intervene with schooling to determine the social positon of urban workers. It suggests that in order to realistically assess the basic assumptions and rationale for urban school desegreagtion, in order to evaluate their consequences, and in order to delineate the linkages between educational and economic opportunities, the effects of recent structural changes in the economy and how they affect schooling for black youths in the inner city must be considered. Furthermore, it notes that the development of a dual labor structure has made it increasingly difficult for workers without special skills and/or higher educational experience to enter the better paid and more desirable jobs in central cities. The point is made that the employment problems facing inner city youths are not simply a consequence of inadequate education. They are also the result of the labor market duality that has developed. A conclusion of this paper is that the strong association between urban public schools and the production of the low wage labor supply will not be significantly affected by programs to achieve desegregation, or by any other programs to improve inner city schools if they are not also designed to offset the problems of educational content and quality which have become attached to the education of the working class in urban schools. (Author/AM)

URBAN SCHOOL DESEGREGATION AND STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE ECONOMY

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SCHOOL DESEGREGATION AND STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE ECONOMY *

Current analyses of metropolitan school desegregation have tended to focus on two themes: (1) the degree to which desegregation facilitates educational achievement among minority children (Armor 1972; Coleman 1966; Crain 1971; Katz 1964; St. John 1975) and (2) the extent and impact of white emigration from the urban core as a consequence of school desegregation, i.e. the so called "white flight" syndrome (Coleman 1975; Farley 1975; Pettigrew and Green 1976; Rossell 1976). Although these analyses raise interesting and important issues, they fail to address more fundamental questions about the role of urban schools in our advanced industrial society and the extent to which structural changes in the economy intervene with schooling to determine the social position of urban workers. This paper derives from a concern with these kinds of questions. If we are to realistically assess the basic assumptions and rationales of school desegregation, if we are to evaluate its consequences, if we are to delineate the linkages between educational and economic opportunities, then we must consider the effects of recent structural changes in the economy on the value of schooling for black youths in the inner city.

The Effect of Structural Changes in the Economy on Central City Employment

Following World War II, fundamental technological and economic changes facilitated the increasing decentralization of American businesses. Improvements in transportation and communication have made the use of open and relatively inexpensive tracts of land outside central cities more feasible, not only for manufacturing, wholesaling and retailing, but also for residential development.

With the introduction and diffusion of single-level assembly line modes of production, the traditional central city multistory factories have been rendered obsolete. At the very time that the high cost and limited availability of land, rising tax rates, increasing traffic congestion and mounting rates of vandalism and other crimes have increased the operating costs of city industries, many firms, previously restricted to the central city locations near ports, freights and passenger facilities, began to rely more heavily on truck transportation and therefore to locate in outlying sites near the expanding metropolitan expressway system, highway interchanges and new housing construction. Moreover, the increasing use of the automobile has freed firms from the necessity of locating near mass transportation facilities in order to attract a labor force. Consequently, industry savings in transportation and communication are no longer necessarily associated with central city locations. Indeed, in the nation's twelve largest metropolitan areas, the central city's proportion of all manufacturing employment dropped from 66.1 percent in 1947 to less than 40 percent in 1970 (cf. Kain 1968, p.3; Manpower Report of the President 1971, p.88; and Hummel and Nagel 1973, p.219).

This remarkable shift in industry concentration has occurred despite the fact that the numbers of central city businesses "actually moving to the suburbs have been relatively small" (Manpower Report of the President 1971, p.88). The problem for the central city is not so much the loss of industry as it is the lack of industrial growth or expansion. Manufacturing employment has tended to expand outside central cities, especially in the new aircraft, aerospace and electronics industries. In a recent study of ten large metropolitan areas, 79 percent of the employment growth in manufacturing from 1959 to 1967 occurred outside the central city (see Table 1). Furthermore, the growth of retail and wholesale trade was overwhelmingly located in the suburbs.

Insert Table 1 about here

Whereas the economic stalemate in the central city manufacturing sector has meant limited opportunities for those seeking better paying blue-collar jobs, the developing service producing industries have effected a rapid expansion of white collar employment in the last two decades; so much so that, the national economic structure has actually shifted gradually from a basis in goods-producing industry (manufacturing, construction, mining and agriculture) to a concentration on service-producing industry (transportation, service, government, public utilities, trade and finance). In 1947, the majority (51%) of American workers were located in the goods-producing sector of the economy; by 1968, sixty-four percent of American workers were employed in the service-producing industries; and by 1980, that figure will increase to sixty eight percent (Bell 1973, p.132). The nationwide shift from goods to services has been most pronounced in the central cities. Furthermore, the expanding employment opportunities in the clerical, professional and administrative positions associated with finance, insurance and real estate firms, professional and business services, and federal, state and local government agenices have higher educational and training requirements than those associated with blue collar employment (except possibly for the skilled crafts).[1] It is true that the service industries that employ low skilled workers (in jobs ranging from hospital orderly to dishwasher) have also grown substantially. But, such jobs are poorly paid, menial and dead end.

The situation for inner city workers is aggravated by the role of powerful labor unions. Recent research in black unemployment in 30 of the nation's largest cities revealed that although blacks do not experience

TABLE 1. EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE THE CENTRAL CITY IN 10 LARGE METROPOLITAN AREAS, BY INDUSTRY, 1959 AND 1967 [1]

Area and Industry	Percent of SMSA employment outside central city		Percent of SMSA employment growth outside central city, 1959 to 1967
	1959	1967	
Average, 10 areas.....	28	32	54
Atlanta.....	22	27	36
Baltimore.....	30	37	72
Boston.....	61	62	73
Houston.....	7	6	5
Kansas City.....	26	28	37
New Orleans.....	18	24	40
New York.....	15	19	49
Philadelphia.....	40	46	79
St. Louis.....	42	49	85
Washington, D.C.....	39	49	70
Average, all industries..	28	32	54
Manufacturing.....	37	41	79
Retail Trade.....	32	41	78
Wholesale Trade.....	16	22	68
Services.....	23	29	42
Finance, insurance, and real estate.....	13	18	42
Other.....	27	28	31

[1] The standard metropolitan statistical areas (SMSA's) covered are those for which the central-city county was substantially coterminous with the central city. The definition for each area for 1959 was corrected to 1967 boundaries, for comparability. Excludes government workers and the self-employed.

Adapted from: Manpower Report of the President, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971.

employment barriers in the menial, casual jobs of the low wage sector, they do encounter considerable difficulty in entering the higher paying jobs in the manufacturing, construction and wholesale industries (Friedlander 1972). In fact, the greater the proportion of jobs found in these industries, the higher the unemployment rate in the slums. Such industries, coincidentally, are among those dominated by a white elite labor force who, through effective unionization, have solidified their hold on the higher paying blue collar jobs. Unions in central industry firms have successfully pressed for consistent wage increases, increased fringe benefits and generated a protective private welfare state financed by management. The net effect has been the virtual elimination of the employability of a floating transient labor force. Employers who hire additional workers in high demand periods find themselves penalized because of changes in compensation and work rules promoted by trade unions and supplemented by legislation. Thus, employer expenditures for unemployment insurance, social security, worker's compensation insurance, and other fringe benefits have made labor cost more a function of the number of workers employed than of the number of hours worked. Accordingly, many central firm managers find it cheaper simply to pay their regular work force overtime than to hire additional employees under the welfare umbrella; consequently, even when demand is high, transient workers are forced into lower paying menial jobs, or onto the unemployment rolls. Meanwhile, in the face of continuing automation, the labor unions seek to preserve the interests of the nuclear work force by gradually reducing the less senior workers when demand is low and thereby increasing the transient work force. In short, the pattern of overemployment for senior workers reinforces the pattern of unemployment for junior workers in the central industries of the United States economy (Averitt 1969).

Thus, the lack of job expansion in the manufacturing sector, the fact that the desirable jobs in the service industries require education and training, and the tight control of higher paying blue collar jobs by powerful unions means that the better paid and more desirable positions into which workers can enter without special skills and/or higher educational experience are decreasing in central cities, not only in relative terms, but sometimes in absolute numbers (Manpower Report of the President, 1971, p.91).

Urban Education and Structural Changes in the Economy

As a result of the decentralization of American business and the movement from goods to service industries, a number of economists have argued that a dual labor market has developed in central cities, a segmented market in which blacks with less than a college education have been shunted into a low wage sector where education is irrelevant to their positions and to their chances for promotion.[2] More importantly, particular behavioral and attitudinal attributes have come to be seen as characteristic of both the jobs and the workers in the low wage sector. The jobs are menial, low paying and highly unstable; the working conditions are poor; there is no opportunity for advancement and there are high rates of job turnover. Furthermore as Elliot Liebow (1967) has argued, low status, dead-end jobs tend to be viewed with contempt by both those who hold them and by the broader society. It is little wonder then that these jobs often go unfilled, particularly in the face of a welfare system and of illegal 'street' activities which often provide a better income than available legitimate employment (Friedlander 1968).

The problems of labor market segmentation are dramatically underscored when

we examine the increasing levels of education among workers in the low wage sector. In the past two decades, although educational levels have increased throughout the population, the significant increases in median education have occurred only in the low wage sector of the economy (operatives, service workers and laborers). For example, during the period between 1952 and 1972, occupations in the service sector showed the highest increase in median educational attainment (36% as opposed to an increase of only 6% in managerial and administrative positions) (See Table 2).

Table 2 about here

We can infer that the consequences of these changes in the low wage sector have been particularly acute among the black population of the central cities. In 1970, three out of every five black men employed in the central cities were in comparatively low level job categories of laborers, service workers and operatives, as opposed to only one out of every three white males. Moreover, almost three out of five black women were in service or operative jobs, twice the rate for white women (Manpower Report of the President 1971, p. 89). Although some of the jobs included in these aggregate statistics are probably part of the high wage sector (particularly the operative positions which tend to be among the higher paying semi-skilled jobs usually associated with the manufacturing industries), they provide a rough estimate of the heavy concentration of blacks in the low wage labor force of central cities. And they underscore our uncertainty about the ability of the advanced industrial economy to provide solid stable employment opportunities for black workers with only a high school education or less.

TABLE 2 EDUCATION BY OCCUPATIONAL LEVEL, 1952-1972

Occupational Level	Median Education 1952	1972	% Increase
Professional, technical workers	16+	16.3	0-1
Managers and administrators	12.2	12.9	6
Farmers and farm workers	8.3	9.4	13
Sales workers	12.3	12.7	3
Clerical workers	12.5	12.6	0-1
Craftsmen and kindred	10.1	12.2	21
Operatives	9.1	11.6	27
Non-farm laborers	8.3	11.2	35
Service workers	8.8	12.0	36

Source : U.S. Department of Labor, Manpower Report of the President, 1973.

The problems of these structural changes are brought into even sharper relief when we examine the unemployment and labor force participation rates for younger blacks in light of their increasing rates of high school completion. In 1970, there was a difference of only .4 of a year between the races in the median schooling acquired by persons under thirty-five. And, in the central city ghettoes, educational attainment for nonwhites was equivalent to the national average. Further, the rate of high school completion has steadily increased among the younger cohorts. For example, in 1970, for black youths aged 20-24, the rate of high school completion was 57.1% as opposed to 61.2% for whites. Over time then, education has consistently increased both absolutely and relative to whites (Harrison 1972, p.799). Nonetheless, the employment problems of black youths in the inner city are rapidly approaching a disastrous level.

In 1954, the black teenage unemployment percentage was only slightly greater than the white rate. However, each year since 1966, a greater than two to one black-white teenage unemployment ratio has been officially recorded. From 1970 to 1974, black teenagers' unemployment has averaged 32 percent; and the 1974 rate of 32.9 percent was close to two and a half times greater than the recorded white teenagers' unemployment (see Table 3).[3] At the time of this writing, the most recent Bureau of Labor Statistics figures reveal that for June of 1976, the unemployment percentage for black teenagers jumped to 40.3 and for white teenagers to 16.0.[4]

Table 3 about here

TABLE 3. UNEMPLOYMENT RATES BY RACE FOR PERSONS 16-19 YEARS OLD: 1954 to 1974

Year	Unemployment Rate		Ratio: Black and other races to white
	Black and other races	White	
1954	16.5	12.1	1.37
1955	15.8	10.3	1.53
1956	18.2	10.2	1.78
1957	19.1	10.6	1.80
1958	27.4	14.4	1.90
1959	26.1	13.1	1.99
1960	24.4	13.4	1.82
1961	27.6	15.3	1.80
1962	25.1	13.3	1.89
1963	30.4	15.5	1.96
1964	27.2	14.8	1.84
1965	26.2	13.4	1.96
1966	25.4	11.2	2.26
1967	26.5	11.0	2.41
1968	25.0	11.0	2.27
1969	24.0	10.7	2.24
1970	29.1	13.5	2.16
1971	31.7	15.1	2.10
1972	33.5	14.2	2.36
1973	30.2	12.6	2.37
1974	32.9	14.0	2.35

Source : Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Handbook of Labor Statistics, 1975

The high rates of unemployment for black teenagers in the 1970's are, to some extent, related to the general slowdown in the American economy. However, even in the relatively high business activity year of 1969, the rate of unemployment for black teenagers was 24 percent (Manpower Report of the President, 1972, p. 85). Moreover, in 1974, the percentage of unemployment for black teenagers was almost five times as high as that for black adults (whose rate of 7.5 nearly doubled the white adult rate of 4.2), whereas twenty years earlier, black teenagers had been unemployed at a rate (16.5) only slightly less than twice the black adult rate (9.4).[5] Even the very high official unemployment figures do not capture the real condition of black teenage joblessness, however. A 1972 study conducted by the United States Department of Labor showed that while the black teenage unemployment rate increased by 10 percentage points from the first quarter of 1970 to the second quarter of 1971, their rate of participation in the labor force declined by more than 7 points from 51.2 to 43.8 (Manpower Report of the President 1971, p. 85). These figures suggest that the higher the unemployment, the more that black teenagers give up looking for work altogether.

School Desegregation and Structural Changes in the Economy

Given the fact that the development of a dual labor structure has made it increasingly difficult for workers without special skills and/or higher educational experience to enter the better paid and more desireable jobs in central cities, a singular focus on schooling as an explanation of the employment problems of younger urban blacks is myopic. In other words, it obscures the way that structural shifts in the economy have contributed

to a surplus of unemployed and underemployed workers in the low wage sector, despite increasing levels of formal education. Nonetheless, it would be equally shortsighted to ignore the way in which the inner city school system interacts with the urban economy and, in effect, reinforces the segmented labor market. This is particularly crucial when we consider that job placement in the higher wage sector not only depends on levels of training and formal educational attainment, but also on subjective factors relating to socialization experiences provided by the school, home, and community environments.

In a provocative study of the history of American education, Bowles and Gintis argue that consignment to inner city schools helps guarantee the economic inferiority of minority students. They claim that this occurs in several ways. First, inner city schools train minority youth so that they feel and appear capable only of performing jobs in the low wage sector. Citing a recent study of disadvantaged workers which indicated that appearance was between two and three times as important to potential employees as previous work experience, high school diplomas or test scores, Bowles and Gintis contend that students in ghetto schools are not encouraged to develop the levels of self esteem or the styles of presentation which employers perceive as evidence of capacity and ability. Secondly, the schools adopt patterns of socialization which reflect the background and/or future social positions of their students. Those schools with a high concentration of poor and minorities have radically different internal environments, methods of teaching and attitudes toward students than predominantly white, upper middle class suburban schools. Specifically, Bowles and Gintis state:

> Blacks and minorities are concentrated in schools whose repressive, arbitrary, generally chaotic internal order, coercive authority structures and minimal possibilities for advancement mirror the characteristics of inferior job situations. Similarly, predominantly working-class schools tend to emphasize behavioral control and rule following, while schools in well to do suburbs employ relatively open systems that favor greater student participation, less direct supervision, more student electives and in general a value system stressing internalized standards of control. (1976, p. 132).

If the characteristics of inferior job situations are mirrored in the internal order of both predominantly black and working class schools, then efforts to improve inner city public schools have to address the problems of both racial isolation and class subordination. Just as the structural changes in the economy have fundamentally altered the job market situation for inner city blacks, so too have the class and racial composition of schools and urban residential neighborhoods been affected by population movements responding to economic changes. The technological and economic shifts of the post World War II period precipitated the movement toward industry decentralization and residential development in the suburbs. Once these processes were underway, they became part of a vicious circle of metropolitan change and relocation. The flight of the more affluent families to the suburbs has meant that the central cities are becoming increasingly the domain of the poor and of the stable working class. "The flight to the suburbs," states Tom Kahn, "reflects not only a racial separation, but an occupational one as well. Most suburbanites are white collar workers in the expanding service-producing sector of the

economy. . . The blue collar workers who live in the suburbs tend to be skilled workers protected by strong unions. Thus, the technological changes in our economy have profoundly affected the composition and layout of our cities" (1964, p. 118).

Accordingly, in major cities such as New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, St. Louis and Detroit, it is not only the case that public schools are becoming increasingly black, it is also true that the background of both black and white students is primarily working or lower class. The more affluent white and black families are increasingly choosing the option of sending their children to private schools (if they remain in the central city) or to suburban schools (if they move to the metropolitan fringe).

For all these reasons, the strong association between urban public schools and the reproduction of the low wage labor supply will not be significantly affected by programs to achieve desegregation, or by any other programs to improve inner city schools, if they are not also designed to offset the problems of educational content and quality which have become attached to working class schools. But, as we have tried to demonstrate in this paper, the employment problems facing inner city youths are not simply a consequence of inadequate education. They are also the result of the labor market duality that has developed hand in hand with the shift from industrial to advanced industrial society.

Although formidable, the barrier between the low wage and high wage sectors is not impermeable. There are patterns of mobility across this boundary; some workers move out of low wage jobs into more stable, higher paying positions.[6] More important, however, is the fact that the division between these two sectors does not necessarily derive from substantive differences in education and training. The conventional assumption of policy makers has been that the job requirements of positions in the high wage sectors demand advanced

training and education. Several recent studies challenge this notion and reveal in their findings that in many cases there is little relation between educational achievement and worker performance, that education is a poor index of anything except starting salary and wage rates. In a sample of professional, managerial and technical workers in two large corporations, Ulman and Rawlins learned that 41% of those in positions requiring a college degree saw little or no relationship between their academic schooling and their job skills, and that for the vast majority of these employees, training occurred on the job. From these findings they concluded that "the very characteristics screened for by education requirements may be the most important attributes required for in the job held, i.e., intelligence, motivation and a certain ability to get along with peers and superiors" (italics added). In many cases then, educational credentials, particularly college degrees, serve as a screening mechanism for entrance into the higher wage sector, a signal of potential, rather than a measure of skill.[7]

We are led to conclude therefore that we cannot and should not deal with the educational problems of inner city youths as if they exist in a vaccuum. For, in a very real sense, they are partly derived from and inextricably connected to the larger problem of the economy. For all these reasons, we second Bennett Harrison's claim that the singular emphasis of many policy makers on schooling has resulted in a concentration on the alleged limitations or shortcomings of urban black youths and in a corresponding lack of attention to the "defects in the market system which contrains the poor from realizing their potential" (1972, p. 812).

Footnotes

* This is a revised version of a paper presented at the 71st annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, New York, August, 1976. Parts of this manuscript are based on William J. Wilson's The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and the Changing American Social Structure. New York: Random House, forthcoming.

1. The association of white-collar jobs with the growing service producing sector of American society is not to overlook the fact that there are blue-collar and white-collar positions in both the service and goods producing sectors of our economy. However, even in the goods producing sector, the proportion of blue-collar jobs is losing ground to white-collar positions. Daniel Bell has commented on this situation: "The spread of services, particularly in trade, finance, education, health and government, conjures up the picture of a white-collar society. But all services are not white-collar, since they include transportation workers and auto repairmen. But then, not all manufacturing is blue-collar. In 1970, the white-collar component within manufacturing -- professional, managerial, clerical, and sales -- came to almost 31 percent of the work force, while 69 percent were blue-collar workers (6,055,000 white collar and 13,400,000 blue-collar). By 1975, the white-collar component will reach 34.5 percent. Within the blue-collar force itself, there has been a steady and distinct shift from direct production to non-production jobs, as more and more work becomes automated and in the factory, workers increasingly are employed in machine-tending, repairs, and maintenance, rather than on the assembly line." Daniel Bell, The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting. New York: Basic Books, 1973, p. 133.

2. For a good discussion of the dual labor market literature, see Michael L. Wachter, "Primary and Secondary Labor Markets: A Critique of the Dual Approach," Brookings Papers on Economic Activity, 1974: 4, pp.637-681.
3. These figures for black youths are based on those computed for "blacks and other races," in which about 90 percent are black. However, in 1973, the U.S. Department of Labor began to collect data on blacks alone, and they indicate that when this is done, official unemployment rates for blacks (adults and teenagers) actually increase. In the case of teenagers, the black unemployment rate increases from 32.9 percent to 34.9 percent in 1974 and the black white teenage employment ratio increases from 2.4 to 2.5.
4. These figures are derived from "The Unemployment of Nonwhite Americans: The Effects of Alternative Policies," Background Paper No. 11, Washington, D.C.: Congress of the United States, Congressional Budget Office, July 19, 1976.
5. These figures are based on Handbook of Labor Statistics, 1975, Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975.
6. The extent to which educational credentials serve a gate-keeping function, preventing the movement of labor out of the secondary wage sector, can be controlled. For example, the Supreme Court decision of Griggs v. Duke Power Company ruled that achievement tests and educational requirements which are utilized to allocate workers to particular positions must be relevant to the specific skills which those jobs require. This ruling should inhibit the use of arbitrary credentials to regulate the secondary labor force.

7. Most companies in the private sector do not measure the relation between worker performance and education. However, Ivan Berg's analysis of education in the government sector further reinforces these contentions. For example, a series of tests in 1963 on graduates of military training courses showed only a minor relation between high school completion and achievement in the training program. More convincing, however, were the results of the lowering of standards of acceptance in the military by the Department of Defense in 1966. Their review of the impact of this policy change revealed that the men recruited under the new standards had rates of success in basic training and of progression up the military rank structure which were comparable to those who had entered under the presumably higher standards. And Berg's own analysis of the U.S. Civil Service revealed that promotion rates are explained largely in terms of length of service, and wage and occupational entry levels. (Ivar Berg, Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery, Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).

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